



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

**TO:** Health Care Providers

**FROM:** Robert Galvin, MD, MPH, Commissioner

**DATE:** October 31, 2005

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Galvin'.

**SUBJECT:** Guidelines for Healthcare Providers Re: Stockpiling of Oseltamivir (Tamiflu)

As media attention to a possible influenza pandemic continues, patients are asking their physicians to prescribe oseltamivir (Tamiflu) for personal stockpiles for possible later use during an influenza pandemic. The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) strongly discourages the practice of writing such prescriptions or the establishment of personal stockpiles out of concerns for the possibility of an influenza pandemic due to the current global avian influenza situation.

- There are limited supplies of oseltamivir in the US. Hoarding of this drug now because of concerns about a future pandemic may mean that oseltamivir becomes unavailable for those who need it most during the current regular flu season.
- The indiscriminate and inappropriate use of oseltamivir may promote the development and spread of resistance to this important drug among influenza viruses.
- The highest current priority for use of oseltamivir is for treatment of people during the upcoming regular flu season who are at highest risk from serious complications from influenza infection (e.g., persons >65 years, young children, and persons with certain chronic diseases).
- The next highest priority for use of oseltamivir and other influenza antiviral medications is for prophylaxis in unvaccinated persons at high risk of serious complications from influenza infection who are exposed to influenza (e.g., household in which someone has been diagnosed with influenza or hospital or nursing home with an outbreak of influenza) during the regular flu season.
- National stockpiles of antivirals are being established in the event of an influenza pandemic: personal stockpiling contributes to further delays in establishing this stockpile.
- The further evolution of the avian H5N1 panzootic influenza strain is uncertain. While of high pathogenicity when humans are infected, infection of humans has been very rare.
  - Outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza ("bird flu") have been ongoing in poultry since late 2003.
  - Thousands of workers with little to no protective equipment have been involved in extensive poultry culling operations with few infections among them.
  - No sustained or ongoing transmission (spread) of H5N1 avian influenza among humans has yet occurred.
- Steps people can take to keep themselves and others healthy this flu season, that also apply to an influenza pandemic include: getting their flu shot; covering their cough, staying home from work or school when sick with cough illness; and washing hands regularly and after coughing or touching respiratory secretions.
- DPH recognizes that looking after oneself in a threatening situation is an important topic. The situation with antivirals is an evolving one. Availability of antivirals is an important factor in prescribing decisions. DPH will review these interim guidelines when new data become available.